

Victorian Translators: Stephen W. White and William Struthers Revealed.

by Norman Wolcott and Kieran O'Driscoll

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Who was Stephen White?

Stephen White (July 16 1840–1910+) and William Struthers (October 14 1851–1930+) translated five stories of Jules Verne:

I. * *The Tour of the World in Eighty Days*, tr. by Stephen W. White, Philadelphia Evening Telegraph: June 27, 1874–July 17, 1874; reprinted by Charles E. Warburton (Bound together with II.)

II. *A Fancy of Doctor Ox*, tr. by Stephen W. White, Philadelphia Evening Telegraph, June 20, 1874: reprinted by Warburton, (Bound together with I.)

III. * *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, tr. by Stephen W. White, Philadelphia Evening Telegraph: Sept. 12, 1874–Oct. 5, 1874, reprinted by Warburton. (Bound together with IV.)

IV. *A Winter's Sojourn in the Ice*, tr. by William Struthers, Philadelphia Evening Telegraph: Oct. 6, 1874–Oct. 10, 1874, reprinted by Charles E. Warburton. (Bound together with III.)

V. *Mysterious Island*, Philadelphia Evening Telegraph: 1876, republished Project Gutenberg: 2003 (N. Wolcott and Sidney Kravitz, eds.)

Those of us who attended the NAJVS meeting in Albuquerque last year were swept off our feet by the lecture of Kieran O'Driscoll of Dublin on the "80 Days" translations of Jules Verne. For the first time many of us heard the translations of JV discussed from a linguistics point of view. After some chatting we exchanged e-mails, and Kieran mentioned that his professor had suggested that he use as a second sample a translation of "80 Days" with a known person as translator. (Kieran had been using the anonymous Ward Lock version as no 2). He said he had had difficulty obtaining a copy of the Frith translation at a reasonable price. I suggested he try getting the White translation which was readily available on Ebay for a few dollars, which I said seemed to be a fairly literal rendition. This he did, and I received an e-mail 07 September 2007 stating:

"I have been studying sections of the White translation of TM (80 Days) in detail and find it to be generally of a meticulously accurate standard, and as literal as possible, consistent with the natural TL (Target Language) formulation..."

It now seemed that White might be entitled to an upgrade from the black ball he received for his *Mysterious Island* translation.

On 17 October 2007 I received the following e-mail:

I thus found, on the website, Ancestry.com, to which I am a subscriber, details of a Stephen W. White, born in Pennsylvania in about 1841, thus in his thirties when he first published his version of TM... One thing I am intrigued by and wish to ask your opinion on - White's occupation is listed on that 1880 Census as 'Secretary - N.C.R.R.' ... my hypothesis thus far is that it may refer to the North Carolina Railroad Company, Carolina also being on the East coast, and the railroad originally dating back to the 1840s in Carolina and still using the initials NCRR, not NCRC as one might logically expect.

I replied that I thought the North Carolina RR was too far from Philadelphia, but I would do more looking. This work was done at Library of Congress (LOC) which subscribes to all Ancestry.com databases and numerous newspaper archives. On 18 November 2007 I wrote:

In the 1910 census...the address is listed as 70 Broad St. At the right in handwriting beside SWW under occupation is "Secy of Northern Central RR"

So now the mystery was solved—NCRR was the Northern Central Railway, but what was that? A little "googling" revealed a Wikipedia article and several other websites and the following information was included in my e-mail to Kieran of 19 November 2007:

Northern Central Railway

One of the oldest railroads in the country operating 1828-1972, from Baltimore, MD to York PA and later beyond to Harrisburg PA and north to Lake Ontario.

Controlling interest acquired by Pennsylvania RR in 1861.

Major (and only) connection from Washington to the North and West during the Civil War. (No bridges over the Susquehanna). York PA was the principal rail link to the North.

Lincoln rode on NC RRY coming to Washington from Illinois,, changing stations in disguise at night in Baltimore to avoid assassination.

He rode again going to and returning from Gettysburg in 1863, and in 1865 his funeral cortege traversed the railway en route to Springfield IL.



Lincoln Cortege Picture (Wikipedia)

Baltimore was the 3rd largest city in US at time of Civil War.

Passenger service was terminated in 1957 and the line abandoned in 1972 after hurricane Agnes destroyed many bridges.



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BALTIMORE AND HARRISBURG

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Timetable NCRR 1957 (Wikipedia)

Pennsylvania portion was rebuilt for freight in 1985 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, later abandoned and leased out.

The line operated dinner trains and "murder mystery" trains as the "Liberty Limited" from 1996 to 2001 until it was shut down by the refusal of the York Borough Council to continue access to the city and continuing problems with the Borough Council of New Freedom, PA for access to its terminus.

The line from Baltimore to York is now a bike trail, the Northern Central and York County Heritage Trail.

No. 59—Liberty Limited and The Red Arrow—Observation, Bar Lounge, Sleeping and Dining Cars. Bar Lounge Coach, Reclining Seat Coaches. (All Seats Reserved—No service charge.) Coaches Washington to Harrisburg—(Non Reserved Seats).

No. 53!—Indianapolis Limited and "Spirit of St. Louis"—Sleeping and Dining Cars.

No. 533—The St. Louisian—Sleeping Car.

No. 535—The Statesman and Gotham Limited—Sleeping Cars. Sleeping Cars open in Washington 10 00 p.m., except December 15 to December 27, inclusive.

No. 571—The Metropolitan and Buffalo Day Express—Parlor Cafe Car.

No. 575—The Admiral, The Clevelander, Pennsylvania Limited, The Penn Texas, Northern Express and Dominion Express—Buffet-Lounge and Sleeping Cars. Cafe Coach.

EXPLANATION OF SIGNS.

* Daily.

† Daily, except Sunday.

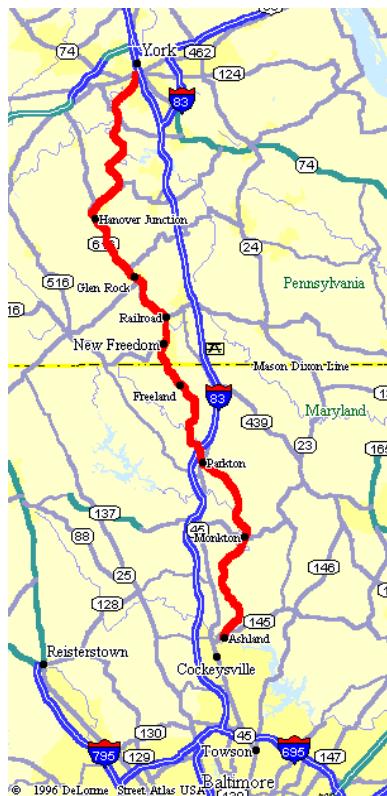
‡ Daily, except Saturday.

§ Sunday only.

♪ Stops only on notice to conductor to discharge passengers.

♪ Saturday only.

¶ Leaves Calvert Station Monday to Friday, except November 24, December 26 and January 2.



Map of Bike Trail

Kieran responded the same day saying about White's translations:

"...his "problem-solving" approach to translating Verne, his straight-forward language transfer of Verne's French without the creative, literary, and non-imitative embellishments of other translators such as Desages, Towle, or Glencross."

And so the situation remained until 14 April 2008 when I wrote:

Kieran, hold your breath.

Last night at the prompting of your enquiries, I did a little more searching on White, since it had been some time since I had run a "google" search, and things do pop up . . . But the most revealing was the "History of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company: with plan of Organization", published by Henry T. Coates, 1895.¹ On Page 52 of Volume II we find the biography of Stephen W. White, and on page 51 we have a full page spread of the photos of four people, one of whom is Stephen W. White.

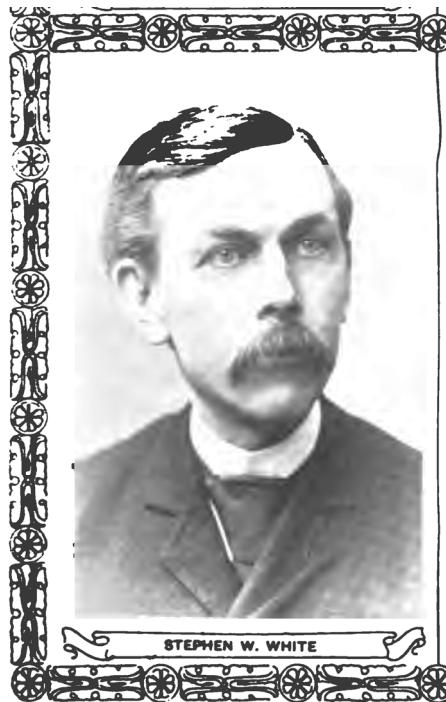


Photo of Stephen W. White

White had emerged from the shades of history. From the biography in the Pennsylvania Railroad History the following picture emerges:

Stephen W. White—biography

Born 16 July 1840 in Philadelphia

Educated in public schools of that city

Entered Central High School February, 1854, from Jefferson Grammar School

Graduated February, 1858, as Bachelor of Arts at the head of his class

Later received the degree of Master of Arts from the High School

1858—1870 Shorthand clerk to the Treasurer of the American Sunday School Union, assistant editor of *Sunday School Times*, and book-keeper to several importing dry goods houses.

1870—1873 Private secretary (1 February 1870) to the great banker Jay Cooke, and remaining with him until after the bankruptcy of the firm in the Panic of 1873.(18 September 1873).

1875—Entered railroad service as Assistant Secretary of the Northern Central Railway, (a position he held until his retirement).

Later appointed to numerous boards of sections of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Active member of Associated Alumni of Central High School
Active churchman in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania
Has published some excellent translations from the German and
the French

"His writings are all clean and terse, displaying careful study and
methodical arrangement, resultants of his early training in
stenography, in which science *he is not only an expert but an
accomplished devotee* (my italics)."

From this we can draw the interesting conclusion that we owe his translations to a financial disaster, the Panic of 1873. Stephen White was thus forced into other activities than as secretary to a banker, and apparently started his own business as a phonographer (short hand secretary) at 114 So. Third Street, which led to his translating work for the *Evening Telegraph* with offices nearby. He thus joins the ranks of Lewis Mercier, Mrs. Agnes Kinloch Kingston, Agnes Dundas Kingston and Mrs. Frances Cashel-Hoey, who also entered the translation business out of financial necessity. White apparently continued translating even after joining the Railway, as *Mysterious Island* was not published until 1876.

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was to	[The first instalment of <i>The Tour of the World in Eighty Days</i> was published in <i>The Evening Telegraph</i> of Saturday, June 27. The back numbers containing the serial can be had at the publication office—No. 108 South Third street.]	
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Picture of Stephen White Advertisement

On 15 April 2008 in an e-mail Kieran raised anew the question of how White could have received an MA with only a high school education. The answer to this question completes the story. Accidentally I had just purchased a biography² of Ignatius Donnelly (another favorite of mine—the Minnesota politician, orator, populist, and promotor of the Atlantis myth). I knew that he came from Philadelphia, and I wondered about his early education there. My wife asked me if he had a college education. Imagine my surprise when I opened the book and found the following sentence:

"Attending high school was undoubtedly the greatest single experience in Donnelly's youth not only because it lifted him from the ranks of the average citizen, but also because he studied at the Central High School. Directed by Alexander D. Bache, later president of Girard College, it was superior to many of the denominational colleges of the era, with a curriculum including mathematics, physics, natural science, chemistry, French, Latin, Greek, and drawing. When Bache went on to Girard College, John S. Hart assumed the leadership of CHS. The institution had a reputation as an "immensely aristocratic place where all the well-bred, patent-leathershod silver watch boys" studied under "the most aristocratic individual in this country, not excepting the President of the United States, John S. Hart, L.L.D."

"Edmund Spenser was Hart's favorite author; Donnelly's reading ranged from Canterbury Tales to Richard Haklyut's Voyages. ..he (Donnelly) was unable to master German syntax (showing that German was taught there as well), yet he read the language well enough to have his set of Goethe rebound in expensive worked covers when he left Philadelphia for the west."

Clearly this was no ordinary high school. Central High no doubt had a similar effect on Stephen White. Another trip to Wikipedia revealed an article on the history of Central High School, Philadelphia. There we learn that:

"Central High School holds the distinction of being the only high school in the United States that has the authority, granted by an Act of Assembly in 1849, to confer academic degrees upon its graduates. This practice is still in effect, and graduates who meet the requirements are granted the Bachelor of Arts degree. Central also confers high school diplomas upon graduates who do not meet the requirement for a degree."

Notable alumni include Noam Chomsky (linguistics), Bill Cosby (humorist), Frank Stockton (writer), Douglas Feith (invasion of Iraq), Alexander Woolcott (columnist, critic), and Jeremiah Wright (Obama's nemesis).

The mystery of the BA and MA are finally revealed! Also we learn that Hart was president of the school from 1842-1858, during both persons' attendance. Alexander Bache, the founder, (grandson of Benjamin Franklin), an astronomer, was formerly a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and later head of the U.S. Coast Survey and completed the mapping of the entire coastline of the U.S.

In another visit to Wikipedia we also learn that there is a book, *History of Central High School*,³ published by Lippincott in 1902 which has been scanned by Google-books.

On p. 106 we have, repeated from "Alumni Notes of various alumni on Professor Kirkpatrick":

"I would mention my indebtedness to the study of phonography, which we were taught by Professor Kirkpatrick during the first two terms. He was very successful in the imparting of a thorough knowledge of shorthand, and it has had a very important bearing on the major portion of my business career."—**Stephen W. White**

Sir Isaac Pitman (1813-1897) published the first edition of his shorthand system of phonography in 1837. The system is somewhat akin to the Hebraic way of writing in which only the consonants are written down and the vowels are indicated by embellishments. The first dictionary of stenographic outlines was produced from lithographic transfers written by the inventor in 1846 with the following title: *A Phonographic Dictionary of the English Language; containing the most usual words to the number of twelve thousand*. This only eight years before White commenced the study of phonography, showing that he was one of the early practitioners. Isaac Pitman & Sons, the Phonoographic Depot, 2 West 45th St, New York City, published numerous reference works and novels in shorthand script in the 19th century including *Sherlock Holmes*, Dickens, and *Around the World in Eighty Days*⁴ by Jules Verne (50 cents). In the Tenth International Contest, Atlantic City, NJ, 1914, a Pitman phonographer won the gold medal in the 280 wpm test with 98.6% accuracy.



1916 Advertisement⁵

Another Central High alumnus reminisces:

"I had taken private lessons in French from Professor Bregy before entering the High School, and also from Professor H. Magnin, so that perhaps I had to some extent advantages over some of my fellow-students. This, however, was not the case with the German language, for there for the first time I was introduced by Professor F. A. Roese to the beauties of the German language and literature. I supplemented my lessons in German in the school by private lessons with Professor Roese, which continued over a long period. I got to know him very well, and found him to be a most cultivated and agreeable companion, and I recall now with much pleasure the time spent with him in reading Schiller and Goethe, to say nothing of some of the minor poets. **Stephen W. White**, of the Thirty-first Class, was a student with me in these private lessons, and *was the most apt of any of us in acquiring the German Language.*"

This completes our knowledge of Stephen W. White to date. Clearly not a hack writer, he was a literate product of the American public schools capable of comparison and perhaps superior to many of the translators employed by Sampson Low in England. His training in phonography gave him an excellent ear for languages, supplementing his academic achievements. Unfortunately we do not have any indication of his other translations from the German, but at least he has emerged as a real person, and no longer just a footnote in a library catalogue.

William Struthers the Poet and William Struthers the Millionaire

William Struthers (October 14, 1854–1930+) was a minor poet from Philadelphia in the latter part of the 19th century. He was the grandson of John Struthers who emigrated from Scotland in 1816 and settled in Philadelphia where he set up a marble cutting and architectural business. After his death in 1840 the business was carried on by his son William Struthers (the poet's uncle), later operating as William Struthers and Sons. The firm was engaged in the erection of hundreds of monuments and marble buildings throughout the 19th century, and was awarded the largest contract, \$5,000,000, that was ever awarded to any one firm for the marble work of the "new" Philadelphia public buildings. After his death in 1876 the business was conducted under the old title by his sons William Struthers, Jr. (poet's cousin, 15 June 1848–12 December 1911) and John Struthers and then by the latter alone.⁶

By the time he retired (sometime after 1876) William Struthers, Jr. had become a millionaire. He spent time traveling in Europe (1888-1892) staying at the Hotel Mirabeau in Paris,⁷ and was an early member (elected 20 May 1877) of the "Jekyll Island Club" in Georgia, the subject of several current documentary biographies.⁸; (now a State Park in danger of privatization and development—see

www.savejekyllisland.org.) He resigned from the club after three years as he had not used it, and then was re-elected a second time (13 November 1895) at the urging of his friends and constructed a house “Moss Cottage” on Jekyll Island in 1896. He had the distinction of being the first person to bring a motor car onto the island, (the island is rather large) only to have it voted off because of the noise. In 1900 he was residing in Radnor, Delaware with four servants where he had a summer house. He had one daughter, Jean (b. Aug, 1871), and he died on 12 December 1911 less than one month after his wife Savannah (“Vannie”) (1849–23 Nov 1911).



Moss Cottage was built in 1896 by William Struthers Jr. In 1899 Struthers made several modifications to his cottage, adding a bay window at the north end and a conservatory at the south end. (Everett Collection, Coastal Georgia Historical Society)

Picture of Moss Cottage

But William Struthers the poet was not William Struthers the millionaire. The child of a younger son of the founder of the Struthers empire, he was born into more modest surroundings. His father was John S. Struthers (b. Jan 1827). At the time of the 1860 census at age 34 he was living in Newark, New Jersey listing his occupation as a Railroad Conductor, with his wife “Lizzie” (age 31) and four children Helen (13), William (5), Mary (3) and Agnes (5 mo). By the time of the 1900 census John S. and his family were back in Philadelphia at #50 6th Street with his unmarried daughters Helen (53) and Agnes (39), his son-in-law Edwin Ward (30), an attorney, his wife Mary (42) and William (the poet, 45). At this time his father was listed as a “bank clerk”, and William’s occupation was listed as a “Musical Critic”.

By the time of the 1930 census, Edwin Ward the attorney (50) was the head of the household still supporting his in-laws William (74) and Agnes (66). The house is listed at a value of \$15,000, a significant sum at the time, and also as "having a radio".

"William Struthers' father (John S.) served in the Civil War, first as captain in the Pennsylvania cavalry, and then as commander-in-chief of a division of the 'Dismounted Camp' near Washington. While there he had his wife and children with him; and thus young Struthers had an opportunity of studying the poetical side of a soldier's camp life",⁹ later described in his poems.

William was not a healthy child and was educated privately. "Although he managed to weather through to manhood, it was with the struggle of an invalid, too powerless even now (1890) to raise his voice above a whisper. Yet he is an accomplished scholar and linguist. Various translations of his, prose from the French and Italian, verse from the Spanish, have appeared in the leading magazines and newspapers; while as a writer of original verse, his pleasing poems, sonnets, rondeaus, etc., have made his name familiar."¹⁰

William, a son in a prominent family, would have been well known to Stephen White, who was fourteen years his senior, and undoubtedly the latter appreciated his literary abilities. The "Struthers" family in 1870 would be as well known in Philadelphia as the "Kennedys" are today. Engaged in a lengthy translation himself, White probably welcomed the opportunity of offering to Struthers the translation of the short piece *A Winter's Sojourn in the Ice*. White no doubt knew of William's infirmities, and was doing the family a favor. Also the association of the Struthers name with a translation could only help both White's business and the reputation of the *Evening Telegraph*. Thus this little piece is the only translation of Verne known to date done by a Victorian poet.

Struthers published his poems in literary magazines mostly in the 1890's. He wrote mainly sonnets, a verse form not the easiest in which to compose. Several books of his poems have been published:

Transcriptions from Art and Nature, 96 p., Philadelphia, London:
Drexel Biddle, 1902

Lyric Moods and Tenses, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1910

Rhythmic Soliloquies, Philadelphia: Wm. F. Fell, 1910 (reprinted in part from various periodicals)

The following is perhaps a typical sample of his poetry:

Walt Whitman, 1901

William Struthers, from the *Conservator*

The paling stars proclaimed another day—
He fell asleep when in the century's skies
With smiling lips and trustful, dauntless eyes;
He. genial still, amidst the chill and gray,
He. the Columbus of a vast emprise,
Whose realization in the future lay:
He. who stepped from the well-worn, narrow way
To walk with Poetry in larger guise.
The years announce him in a new born age;
And fortunate, despite of transient griefs,
The ship of his fair fame, past crags and reefs,
Sails bravely on. and less and less the rage
Of gainsaying winds becomes; while to his phrase
The world each day gives ampler heed and praise!

From: Current Literature A Magazine Of Record And Review Vol. XXXI, July-December, New York: Current Literature Publishing Co., 1901

One may question whether the 20 year old invalid was indeed capable of this translation (as I did at first), but unless another William Struthers is found, of the current period, in Philadelphia, (and none seem to appear in the census) with a literary background and knowledge of three languages, I believe we must accept the fact that William Struthers, the poet, has indeed translated Jules Verne.

Note: All quoted materials available on Google-Books.

¹ William Bender Wilson, *History of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company: With Plan of Organization*, Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates & Co., 1895 (Autograph edition limited to two hundred fifty copies)

² Martin Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly, The Portrait of a Politician*, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991 (Reprint) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962

³ Franklin Spencer Edmonds, *History of the Central High School of Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: J B. Lippincott, 1902

⁴ *Around the world in eighty days*, engr. in the easy reporting style of Pitman's shorthand [from the author's illustr. ed., tr. by G.M. Towle and N.R.E. Bell]. / [by Verne, Jules]. [1898]

⁵ The Pitman system was still in use in the 1950's as was used by my wife as a secretary in the Smithsonian Institution.—NMW

⁶ *History of Philadelphia*, Vol. III, Philadelphia: L. H. Everts and Co., Press of J.B. Lippincott, 1884

⁷ U.S. Passport Applications: Ancestry.com, 2008

⁸ Tyler B. Bagwell, *The Jekyll Island Club*, Chalreston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998; June Hall McCash, *The Jekyll Island Cottage Colony*, Athens GA: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1998. Numerous photos are available for viewing at the "google books" and Amazon.com website previews.

⁹ Extract from "The Magazine of Poetry and Literary Review", p. 92, Vol II No 1, January 1890, Buffalo, NY: Charles Wells Moulton

¹⁰ *Ibid.*